



## A SNAPSHOT OF GEORGIA

# OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH



### Overview

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) transitioned from the Department of Human Resources to the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) in 1999. This office manages programs to develop regional, quality health care systems to optimize health status and improve health outcomes in rural and under served areas of Georgia. The office has a 21-member advisory council, and each member of the initial council serves a three-year term, with the length of any subsequent terms determined by lottery, subject to review. During Fiscal Year 2006 (FY2006), the SORH program budget was \$3,735,440 state funds and \$3,491,380 federal funds; just under a 1:1 match ratio.

### Overview of Georgia State Office of Rural Health Programs

#### Primary Care Office:

The Primary Care Office (PCO) facilitates increased access to primary health care by tracking, placing and coordinating the recruitment of physicians and allied health professionals in under served areas through the development of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), rural health clinics and volunteer clinics. The PCO works closely with the Georgia Association of Primary Health Care (GAPHC) to foster the development of FQHC. Initiatives of the PCO include:

- *Federally Qualified Community Health Centers*

Georgia is investing \$1.5 million in the FQHC effort. The PCO and GAPHC are working cooperatively to administer the following initiatives:

- \$750,000 for Health Information Technology
- \$500,000 for development of a FQHC in Liberty County
- \$250,000 to develop FQHC in under served counties

- *Professional Shortage Designations*

The PCO evaluates shortage designations to insure that our under served communities may participate in federal and state programs targeting their special needs. The shortage designations include Medically Under served Areas, Health Professional Shortage Areas, Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas and Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas.

- *J-1 Visa Program* is a state and federal partnership that sponsors international medical graduates who agree to practice primary care in under served areas for a minimum of three years after completing their residency.

- *National Health Service Corps (NHSC)* is a federal initiative to assist HPSA communities in developing, recruiting and retaining physicians and other allied health professionals through either loan repayment or scholarships. Currently there are 48 health professionals in the loan repayment program and 16 NHSC scholars.

### GEORGIA RURAL HEALTH AT-A-GLANCE

- Georgia has two million rural residents;
- Of the 159 counties in Georgia the Human Resources Services Administration (HRSA) has designated 143 as full or partially Medically Under served Areas (MUA);
- 87 Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas (MHPSA);
- 85 as Primary Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA);
- 67 hospitals are located in rural counties; and
- There are 23 Federally Qualified Health Centers with 90 access points in Georgia.

### PROGRAMS

- Primary Care Office
- Hospital Services Program
- Georgia Farmworker Health Program
- Healthcare for the Homeless
- Statewide Area Health Education Centers Network
- Networks for Rural Health

# A SNAPSHOT OF THE OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

## **Hospital Services Program:**

Hospital Services Program provides technical assistance and resources principally to rural and critical access hospitals. Federal funds of \$955,020 are received for the following grant initiatives supporting these efforts:

- **Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program**
  - Facilitates financial efficiency and quality improvement
  - Develops and expands rural health networks
  - Enhances coordination of Emergency Medical Service
- **Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program** is a federal grant program providing \$495,020 in FY2006 to 53 rural hospitals with 49 beds or less to:
  - Enhance quality improvement and reduction of medical errors
  - Facilitate compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
  - Facilitate compliance with Prospective Payment System reimbursement method



## **Georgia Farmworker Health Program:**

Georgia Farmworker Health Program, works to improve the general health status of Georgia migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families by providing cost effective, culturally appropriate primary and preventative health services. Federal funding supporting this effort is \$2,200,086.

## **Health Care for the Homeless:**

Health Care for the Homeless provides primary and preventive health care services to the homeless in Atlanta and Savannah. State funds supporting these efforts are \$406,846.

## **Statewide Area Health Education Centers Network:**

The SORH partners with the Medical College of Georgia to administer this program. The mission of Statewide Area Health Education Centers Network is to create and sustain community-driven, regional programs promoting health care access for medically under served Georgians by improving the quality, diversity, education, supply, distribution and retention of health care professionals. State funds supporting these efforts are \$1,465,000.



## **Networks for Rural Health:**

Networks for Rural Health is designed to help rural providers and community leaders build multi-county regional health care systems which are clinically relevant, financially viable, improve access to care for the under served citizens of Georgia.

